

This issue's "Look Back" is not an eyewitness account, but rather a contribution written by one Frank H. Norton, and published in *The Illustrated American* magazine in 1894. Clearly compiled from the report by William Thomson that appeared in the United States National Museum publication for 1889, Norton also uses some of Thomson's illustrations in his paper.

Mr Norton has assembled an amazing cluster of theories to explain Easter Island's statues: Plato, the Flood, Scripture, the Lemurian theory, catastrophe, sunken continents, the occult, Atlantis, and the Pyramids of Gizeh. Among other things, Mr Norton finds compelling corollaries and coincidences between far-spaced civilizations that are also far apart time-wise. At this early date in time – 1894 – such "theories" already were worming their way into the psyche of readers, and today we still find them alive and active in the form of books and hokey television specials, searching for the "mysteries" of Easter Island. What follows is a wild ride through never-never land.

THE MYSTERY OF EASTER ISLAND. A "FIN DE SIÈCLE" MESSAGE FROM THE PAST

By Frank H. Norton

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To anyone who has given attention to the subject, there is no spot on the earth more remarkable, mysterious, and inexplicable, than is Easter Island.

Of the size, and something near the shape of Manhattan or New York Island, it lies at the southeastern extremity of the Polynesian group in the South Pacific ocean. It is twelve miles long, and four miles wide at its widest point, a rude triangle, and curiously enough, with its trend to the northeast and southwest, as is New York. Here the similarity ends, for at each of its three angles is a volcanic peak, whose fires are long since dead, the island being purely volcanic in character, and composed of basalt, tufa, lava, pumice, and obsidian, which formations, in fact, describe its limits. Geology, in the case of Easter Island, gives no hint as to its age, the entire island having been so twisted and disturbed by vast convulsions as to destroy all traces of classification. The island is surrounded by precipitous cliffs, rising in some cases to a height of one thousand feet. It is 2,500 miles from the nearest mainland, the coast of South America; is in latitude 27° 10' south, and longitude 109° 24' west. It has the climate of Madeira, with a wet and a dry season, but electric storms are unknown there. The prevailing winds come from the east, and are not violent. The island was discovered, but not visited in 1687, and, oddly enough, just at the time of the destruction of Callao by an earthquake. The Spaniards sighted it in 1770 and called it St. Carlos; Captain Cook visited it in 1774, and the La Pérouse expedition explored it in 1786. It remained, however, for the only exhaustive and scientific exploration of

the island to be made by Americans, when the United States steamer *Mohican*, just a century later, remained there for some weeks under orders from the Government, the result being the admirable report of Paymaster William J. Thomson, U.S.N., afterwards published among the papers of the Smithsonian Institution. At present the number of native inhabitants is less than two hundred, though the early voyagers found there as many thousand, and tradition has it that the island was once densely populated, handsomely built up and laid out in streets, and supporting a large and thriving community.

A curious coincidence in this connection is found in the native tradition, which asserts that the island was once divided by the reigning king among his six sons. This king was one Hotu-Matua, who came from the East, from a land which in the Easter Island language meant "the burial place." Now, Plato relates that Solon, when in Egypt, being informed of the destruction of the continent of Atlantis, was told by a priest that Atlantis had been divided by Poseidon, its monarch, among his ten sons. Taking into consideration the fact that Mexican, Peruvian, and Central American traditions of the great flood all have a story of a wonderful man, or god, who came from the East, and who taught the inhabitants the arts and how to live: this brings us to the connection between Easter Island and the flood and fire legends, which forms the *raison d'être* of this article.

That which sets Easter island apart from all other portions of the world is that here exist, in hundreds, colossal statues cut from solid rock, unlike any known to exist anywhere else in the world; and, to use the language of the Encyclopædia Britannica, "the entire subject of their existence in this small and remote island is a mystery." Besides these there are sculptured rocks, houses of a cyclopean character, and inscribed tablets of wood, the inscriptions being in hieroglyphs, or ideographs, in a language totally unknown at present, although alleged translations of some of them were made by natives for the officers of the *Mohican*. As these were made, however, while the translator was under the influence of liquor, they can hardly be considered authoritative. Specimens of these, as well as of the statues, exist in the National Museum in Washington, and in the British Museum; and the illustration to this article will give a fair idea of both, as well as of the existing natives of Easter Island.

These natives, as is the case with those of Samoa, Hawaii, Cook Islands, Society Islands, New Zealand, etc. are of the Indo-Pacific race, known in the aboriginal language *Samaories*. They are believed to be an offshoot from India, and, though the parent race has disappeared, the migration is conceived to have taken place at a period prior to the existence of the Sanskrit language, and must, therefore, have been prehistoric.

A most important feature in connection with the present writing is the fact that all authorities agree that the cessation from image making on Easter Island was caused by some stupendous convulsion or combination of physical conditions of a totally destructive nature. Some idea of the vast character of the industry may be conceived from the fact that the *Mohican* explorers counted five hundred and fifty-five images, measuring from three foot to seventy feet in height, nearly all of which are partially destroyed, those once standing in the one hundred and thirteen stone "platforms" described, being overthrown from their positions by some stupendous force. No mechanism and

no tools – save a few stone chisels – have been found; some of the platforms are two or three hundred feet in length, seven or eight feet high, and ten feet wide; and the images were lowered to the plains from the mountain quarries – sometimes a distance of several miles; and, say the author of the Government report, “we were unable to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion as to how the immense statues on the upper tier of works could be moved to the plain below.” The average weight of the images is from ten to twelve tons, though some of them weigh over forty tons. There are large cemeteries and tombs on the island, containing skeletons which quickly moulder to dust on being disturbed, and which are none of them of greater proportions than those of the existing Polynesian natives. Yet the early voyagers talked of men twelve feet high.

To sum up: we have on Easter Island vast cyclopean ruins, statues rising to twelve times the size of the normal man; no evidence whatsoever as to builders or sculptors; the existing race remotely connected with prehistoric man, evidently originating in India; a written language totally undecipherable (and no written language whatever exists anywhere else in Polynesia, nor any similar statues); and, finally, we have traditions of the “flood-man” always coming from the East.

Easter Island is known to the natives by the name “Te Pito te Henua,” which is said to have been given to it by the legendary Hotu-Matua. The name means “navel,” and there is no reason known for its having been chosen to designate Easter Island, which obtains its popular name from the fact that one of its “discoveries” was made on Good Friday, April 6, 1722. The curious legendary name of Easter Island opens up a branch of the subject which has probably never before been touched upon, and which we purpose laying before the reader for his diversion or thoughtful consideration, as the case may be.

A line drawn straight through the earth from Easter Island to the same degree of north latitude will be found to come out within two degrees of the Pyramid at Gizeh; beginning in the first degrees of the sign Capricorn (as shown on an ordinary terrestrial globe), and ending in the first degrees of the sign Cancer. Now, it is certainly very remarkable – to say the least – that the only two incomprehensible works of prehistoric man should lie, in north and south latitude, at the two extremities of an imaginary line piercing the globe; yet such is the case with regard to the Pyramid of Gizeh and the images on Easter Island. It is hardly less strange that the pyramid, whose name is derived from the Greek root-word *πύρ*, meaning “fire,” should stand in the bed of what was once an ocean or sea, while its antipodes should be a volcanic island; while, to clinch the occult meaning of the situation, we have the Pyramids in Cancer, the fiery sign, and Easter Island in Capricorn, the watery sign. The tropics of Cancer and Capricorn are respectively 23° 27' north and south of the equator, and the earth's obliquity to the ecliptic is 23° 28'. The arrival of the sun in spring and autumn at the corresponding points in the zodiac are the equinoxes; when, as is well known, the earth is visited by tremendous storms and as well by earthquakes. It is generally conceded that it would require but a very slight increase of the obliquity of the earth to cause an alteration in the polar axis – which would, necessarily, bring about either a tremendous cataclysm, or, by the shock to subterranean volcanoes, vast and destructive eruptions. Not to go back so far as

Plato, very many modern scientists, especially in geology, have recognized such results in their study of the material – geological, marine, and botanical – which goes to the making of the earth. In fact, it may be accepted as established, that the earth has passed through many such sudden and convulsive changes. Out of the mass of knowledge, mythological, legendary, traditional, historical, and scientific, it has come to be very well settled that a vast Atlantean, and a far greater Pacific continent once existed, which were thus destroyed. M. Louis Jacolliot, a French *savant* of great ability and comprehensive experience and knowledge, says, in his *Histoire des Vierges*: “One of the most ancient legends of India, preserved in the temples by oral and written tradition, relates that several hundred thousand years ago there existed in the Pacific ocean an immense continent which was destroyed by geological upheaval, and the fragments of which must be sought in Madagascar, Ceylon, Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and the principal isles of Polynesia.” In every one of the localities here named exist cyclopean remains, or prehistoric and unexplained monuments. To this continent has been given the Lemuria; and, while less is known about this than about Atlantis, and for what is known of the latter we are chiefly indebted to Ignatius Donnelly's admirable work on the subject, sufficient information is available to amount to a demonstration.

To those who object to all this on grounds of adherence to the strict orthodox rendering of the Scriptures, let the following passages from 2d Peter, Chapter III, bring enlightenment:

“There shall come in the last days scoffers walking after their own lusts. And saying, where is the promise of this coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing in the water and out of the water.

“Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men...

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

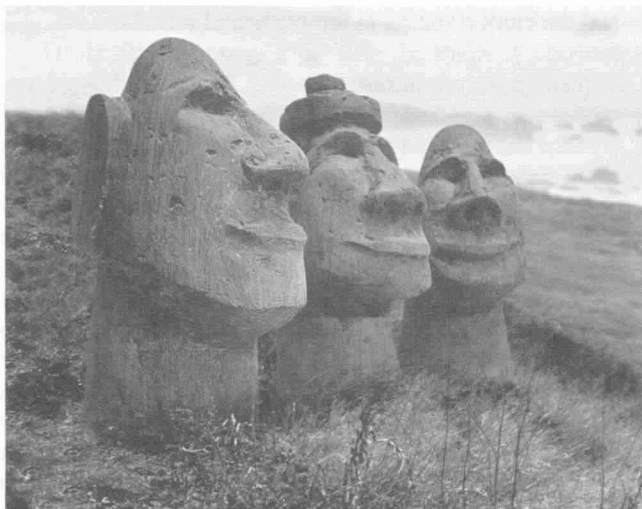
It is a strange “coincidence” that the great Pyramid has been called “The Navel of the Earth”; while to Easter Island was given by the ancient race that found refuge there a name which has been preserved in the existing language, bearing the same meaning; the cradle of a new humanity. There is something fairly terrifying in the thought of the remnant of a vast people, surviving one of those inconceivable periods of destruction, establishing itself on the summits of previously inaccessible peaks, to try and build up a new life from the miserable fragments of the old one. Would it be strange, such being the case, if an effort should be made by the means of the erection of

possibly imperishable monuments, to convey to future generations through a symbolism, one chapter in the fateful history of the world? With no such certainty could this be done by any other means than by the building of a pyramid, as in Egypt; or, by the erections of cyclopean works, as in farther India, and of tremendous images, as on Easter Island. And if, at the same time, there were sufficient knowledge and learning existing to accomplish it, would not the effort also be made to convey, at the same time, some hint of the possible period when such a cataclysm, or such a burning, should again overtake the earth.

FRANK H. NORTON.

MOAI SIGHTINGS

A VERY DAPPER "MR MOAI" was discovered in a public park in Kevelaer, Holland, by Professor Dr Gunter Senft of the Max-Planck-Institut für Psycholinguistik, Nijmegen. Along with the bow tie and wire-rim glasses, check out the nose ring. Thanks to Steve Fischer for providing us with a picture of this hilarious mod *moai*.



CHOCO-HOLICS ALERT: Three colossal Easter Island statues made from pure chocolate were photographed in a shop window of Chocolaterie Lieven Burie in Antwerp. They were created by Belgium's best-known chocolate-artist, Lieven Burnie, who worked several weeks on the chocolate statues. Each one weighed more than 30 kilograms (66 lbs). A photo of the three chocolate *moai* appeared in *De Morgen*, for April 14, 2001, and

we thank Filip Eykens of Belgium, who sent us the clipping, and Mr Burie who followed up with a photograph of the three beetle-browed chocolate *moai* standing in a field.

The weeks before Easter are certainly the busiest period for chocolate makers in Flanders and Holland. Shops begin selling giant Easter eggs when Christmas is barely over. Obviously Mr Burie wanted to show something more creative than eggs for Easter holiday, thus the chocolate (yum) *moai*. Our thanks also to Herbert von Saher of Holland who elaborated on the basic story and contacted Mr Burie. Who got to eat them? Another Mystery of Easter Island.

TWO *MOAI* WERE spotted on a country road in southern Michigan by Kay and Tom Sanger. There, gracing a sagging wooden porch and accompanied by flags, stand two *moai* looking out over a cornfield.



AND STILL IN THE MID-WEST, Joan Wozniak found a *moai* in front of the Kon Tiki bar at the Palmer House in Chicago. Its hands are folded under its chin as it gazes out under slitty eyelids.



ON THE BALBOA peninsula in Southern California, Joan Seaver Kurze snapped a photo of a *moai* peering dimly through a fly-stained window. It is flanked by Polynesian hula dolls.



CHARLIE LOVE REPORTED ON A MODERN-DAY *moai* that he found standing on the porch of an historic theater in the tiny company-town of Sinclair, Wyoming. The *moai* stands on the doorstep, presumably to greet theater-goers.